

Message to the Congress on United States Armed Forces in
Bosnia-Herzegovina
March 3, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

I hereby certify that the continued presence of U.S. armed forces, after June 30, 1998, in Bosnia and Herzegovina is required in order to meet the national security interests of the United States, and that it is the policy of the United States that U.S. armed forces will not serve as, or be used as, civil police in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This certification is presented pursuant to section 1203 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998, Public Law 105-85, and section 8132 of the National Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal year 1998, Public Law 105-56. The information required under these sections is in the report that accompanies this certification. The supplemental appropriations request required under these sections is being forwarded under separate cover.

America has major national interests in peace in Bosnia. We have learned from hard experience in this turbulent century that America's security and Europe's stability are intimately linked. The Bosnian war saw the worst fighting—and the most profound humanitarian disaster—on that continent since the end of the Second World War. The conflict could easily have spread through the region, endangering old Allies and new democracies alike. A larger conflict would have cast doubt on the viability of the NATO alliance itself and crippled prospects for our larger goal of a democratic, undivided, and peaceful Europe.

The Dayton framework is the key to changing the conditions that made Bosnia a fuse in a regional powder keg. It is decisively in American interests to see Dayton implemented as rapidly as feasible, so that peace becomes self-sustaining. U.S. leadership is as essential to sustaining progress as it has been to ending the war and laying the foundation for peace.

I expect the size of the overall NATO force in Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain similar to that of the current SFOR. However, the U.S. contribution would decline by about 20 percent, as our Allies and partners continue to shoulder an increasing share of the burden.

Although I do not propose a fixed end-date for this presence, it is by no means open-ended. Instead, the goal of the military presence is to establish the conditions under which Dayton implementation can continue without the support of a major NATO-led military force. To achieve this goal, we have established concrete and achievable benchmarks, such as the reform of police and media, the elimination of illegal pre-Dayton institutions, the conduct of elections according to democratic norms, elimination of cross-entity barriers to commerce, and a framework for the phased and orderly return of refugees. NATO and U.S. forces will be reduced progressively as achievement of these benchmarks improves conditions, enabling the international community to rely largely on traditional diplomacy, international civil personnel, economic incentives and disincentives, confidence-building measures, and negotiation to continue implementing the Dayton Accords over the longer term.

In fact, great strides already have been made towards fulfilling these aims, especially in the last ten months since the United States re-energized the Dayton process. Since Dayton, a stable military environment has been created; over 300,000 troops returned to civilian life and 6,600 heavy weapons have been destroyed. Public security is improving through the restructuring, retraining and reintegration of local police. Democratic elections have been held at all levels of government and hard-line nationalists—especially in the Republika Srpska—are increasingly marginalized. Independent media and political pluralism are expanding. Over 400,000 refugees and displaced persons have returned home—110,000 in 1997. One third of the publicly-indicted war criminals have been taken into custody.

Progress has been particularly dramatic since the installation of a pro-Dayton, pro-democracy Government in Republika Srpska in December. Already, the capital of Republika Srpska has been moved from Pale to Banja Luka; media are being restructured along democratic lines; civil police are generally cooperating with the reform process; war criminals are surrendering;

and Republika Srpska is working directly with counterparts in the Federation to prepare key cities in both entities for major returns of refugees and displaced persons.

At the same time, long-standing obstacles to inter-entity cooperation also are being broken down: a common flag now flies over Bosnian institutions, a common currency is being printed, a common automobile license plate is being manufactured, and mail is being delivered and trains are running across the inter-entity boundary line.

Although progress has been tangible, many of these achievements still are reversible and a robust international military presence still is

required at the present time to sustain the progress. I am convinced that the NATO-led force—and U.S. participation in it—can be progressively reduced as conditions continue to improve, until the implementation process is capable of sustaining itself without a major international military presence.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
March 3, 1998.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 4.

Remarks Supporting Legislation To Ensure the Safety of Imported Food March 4, 1998

The President. Thank you very much for the terrific remarks. Let me—first I want to move Senator Mikulski's box. [*Laughter*]

Senator Barbara A. Mikulski. I don't want it to be a public health hazard. [*Laughter*]

The President. Put it on some of those little germs. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Senator Mikulski, Senator Kennedy, Congresswoman Eshoo, Congresswoman Millender-McDonald, and Congressman Pallone, thank you, sir. I'd also like to thank Secretary Shalala, Secretary Glickman, and Ambassador Barshefsky for the work they have done, and the Vice President for the work he has done on this issue over the last, now, more than 5 years.

Last night I went to New York to the celebration of Time magazine's 75th anniversary, and a number of us were asked to do portraits of heroic figures of the 20th century. I talked last night about Franklin Roosevelt, and we're in the Roosevelt Room here. But today I'm thinking more of Theodore Roosevelt, for it was Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of this century who made an unprecedented national commitment, for that time, to protect America's families from unsafe food.

It was at the dawn of the industrial age, when Americans were moving from farm to city, for the first time buying their food from other people instead of growing it themselves. Roosevelt ensured that for that time the rules we had

made our food as safe as we could make it. President Roosevelt set a high standard nearly, now, a century ago. It has been a personal commitment of mine and of this administration to update that standard for the 21st century. As the world changes, new challenges arise, it takes new methods to do the old job right.

The Vice President has told you about some things our administration has done to modernize food safety, to keep our food supply the safest in the world. I was literally stunned when I came here to find out that we were inspecting meat in the United States in the same way we had inspected it since 1910, and in the same way that dogs inspect it today, by smelling it and touching it. We're doing a little better now. [*Laughter*]

But as has been made painfully apparent today by the remarks of our two Members of Congress and by you, ma'am, there is still a lot we still have to do to meet the challenges to food safety posed by new patterns of trade and commerce in food.

It wasn't long ago that you could walk to the produce section of a grocery store, look around, and find no more than a dozen items that would be there all year round. Today, thanks to this global food market, it's not uncommon to find up to 400 varieties, almost all of them year around. You can get summer squash in the chill of winter and winter squash